

## Essays.

## PURITY.

**BLESSED** are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Matt. 5: 8.

It is the delight of our Heavenly Father to live and dwell with his children. This not only seems to be his delight at the present time, but has been even from the creation of Adam and Eve and the placing of them in the garden of Eden. "I will dwell in them and walk with them; I will be their God and they shall be my people."

It should also be the desire of all persons to have their Heavenly Father to dwell with them. Yea it should be their great delight, the chief desire of their hearts and of their soul. Yet how few, comparatively speaking, that enjoy this infinitely great and priceless blessing: His presence.

Some do not claim a heavenly parent; others will not deny him, yet will not invite him to come in when he stands knocking at the very door of their hearts. There are others who would like to enjoy his presence but through their inexcusable ignorance, pride, selfishness and carelessness they fail to keep his temples—their bodies—in a condition suitable for the indwelling of the spirit of their blessed Master.

The Lord is a pure and holy being, and in studying in his word we ascertain that he will dwell only in those tabernacles that are like unto him, and will accept those sacrifices which come from pure shrines and are without spot or blemish. Certainly these pure temples of worship and these unblemished sacrifices are just as necessary under the gospel dispensation as they were under the law.

We just stated that the Lord is a pure and holy being, and consequently will not dwell where sin or filthiness is cherished. We are by nature selfish creatures and must be purified. How is this great transforming process to be brought about? How is this great act of transformation to be accomplished? By making ourself a willing and a desiring applicant for this purification or regeneration. This must then be accompanied by earnest petitions to the Lord, through our advocate Christ Jesus, for his cleansing power. Though our robes be crimson and scarlet with sin, this great cleansing power—the blood of the Lamb, is able to make them whiter than snow. Oh! dear reader, let us praise the Lord for this great and grand power of purification that is able to cleanse and purify our entire nature. We are now made able through this divine light that he has shed upon us to see him in this world as well as in the world to come. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

How shall we keep our hearts pure? is an important question to every child of God; to every one that wishes to become a child of God; we would answer; by keeping our thoughts, words, and ways pure; by associating in pure company and reading only pure books.

We think what a terrible crime it is for a church to be wantonly defaced or destroyed, and the culprit that is guilty of such an act is looked upon as being one of the meanest of wretches. What is this compared to the demoralization or the destruction of the temple of our souls? Know you not that your bodies that you are destroying are the temples of your souls, and are the temples of your Lord bought with the blood of Jesus? Know you not that there is a great woe pronounced upon us if we defile these bodies? Ye are the temple of the living God. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is the body, which temple ye are. Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you; which ye have of the Lord and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

We too seldom think that our souls are influenced by our bodies. Is it not through the latter that the former comes in contact with this world? Certainly this is the case; then how very careful we should be that every member of our body should be controlled by righteous and pure motives.

Again it is necessary in order to keep our body and motives pure that our thoughts and conceptions be pure. We must guard against letting a single impure thought cross the threshold of our minds. It is impure thoughts that create and awaken within us impure motives and desires. They always seem to place themselves at the front and to take possession and control our being while our good thoughts are crowded back into obscurity or oblivion. How hard it is to cast from our mind a single impure thought! How many noble and virtuous ones will it efface or destroy! Therefore should we not be extremely careful in what directions we should let our minds wander? Let us with the Psalmist say, "Search me Oh God, and

know my heart; try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any evil way within me and lead me into the way of the everlasting."

We said that pure words were also essential to a pure heart. This we fear is a stumbling block over which many Christians fall from grace and through which many are kept out of the fold. Indeed we deem it one of the greatest stumbling blocks to Christian professors. How many gracious blessings are lost and how frequently is the Holy Spirit grieved away from us by not keeping our tongues under proper control. Let us notice what the scriptures say on this subject: "Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile." "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from trouble." "If any among you seem to be religious and bridlenth not his tongue but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

What think you of these scriptures? You who are continually or even occasionally speaking ill of your neighbor; you, who uttered such indecent language that it put to shame an unbeliever, think of these scriptures, I say, and of the many more similar to them which you can find in God's holy word. How can you, how dare you praise God in the church and then utter such filthy and uncouth language when out, or speak so contemptuously of your neighbor? Do you suppose that the Lord will accept a sacrifice or an offering from such an impure temple and from such a guileful and deceitful tongue? Far from it.

But this is not all. By speaking impure words we not only defile our own hearts but we destroy the purity of our brothers to a greater or less extent, and we throw out a degrading influence to mankind in general. Are we not in this respect our "brother's keeper"? Therefore dear brethren (I mean sisters too) let us ever keep our tongues bridled with God's holy word.

We will now say a few words as to our associates and the books we read. Here again we should exercise great care and prudence in making our selections. It is of infinite importance to us. Upon our selection in a great measure depends our success, not only in a religious but in a worldly sense, as well as our future happiness. We all know the effect of placing a rotten apple with a plate of good ones, or dropping a single drop of black ink in a glass of pure water. Did you ever try how much pure water you will have to add to that in the glass which we have made impure with that single drop of ink to make it apparently as pure as it was before the ink was added? I say apparently as pure, for let you add ever so much pure water it will not be as pure as before. Methinks this is exactly the same with our minds or hearts. One single blot of sin will cast a dark cloud upon any heart no matter how pure it may have been. Every one of us knows the direful effects of bad company. We have all experienced it more or less, and therefore it seems to me that to mention it is all that will be necessary in order to put us on our guard. Bad literature—bad books and bad papers, are even more to be dreaded than bad associates. They have a great influence upon us. There are great oceans of grand and useful books to be read, many more than we will find time to read. Books that will develop our minds, widen our realm of thought, and be great beacon lights casting their rays far out on life's stormy main, thus enabling us to keep aloof from many imposing and destructive obstacles that might otherwise have been our ruin. As parents how very careful we should be as to the kind of books we give our children to read. Remember that one bad book may do your child more harm than years of Christian training, Christian counsel and advice can obliterate. Yes, one paragraph in some paper that you may thoughtlessly bring home may cover up a multitude of pure thoughts obtained by the reading of a number of good and useful books.

Our ways must be pure. We are going still further, and say they must be void of every appearance of evil. Here again we are often at fault. We think if we can do a certain thing without it apparently injuring us, that it is right and proper. Does this agree with the teachings of the divine word? Here what Paul says, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended or is made weak." We understand by this that we have no right to engage in any game or amusement or connect ourselves with any society or practice any habit, which if our weaker brother should attempt to do, would lead him astray. We again see that we are not only responsible for our own souls, but under certain conditions and to certain extents for the souls of others. We will then say in conclusion, dear Christian and fellow travelers, to the bar of God, to ever keep God's temples cleansed and garnished for the coming of the Lord.

A temple which the blood of Jesus bought,  
From every sin and guilt its heart set free;  
With pure and holy words, ways, deeds and  
thought.

A pure and consecrated Christian be.

R. L. RUSSELL.

Syracuse, Ind.

## The Thorn in The Flesh.

**PAUL**, speaking concerning this subject, says "And lest I should be exalted above measure \*\*\* there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of satan to buffet me." 2 Cor. 12: 7. By examining the context we see that the danger of Paul's exaltation resulted from the abundant revelation he had received. And when we take into consideration the fact that man has fallen from his original perfect condition, we can also readily see how abundant revelations would tend to exalt him. This tendency to exaltation is in perfect accord with depraved human nature, which Paul possessed; and which all the human race has possessed ever since the fall. Man was not originally created so, as before intimated. Adam was, so far as physical, or intellectual endowments was concerned, a perfect human being. What man did lack however was experience. This was the cause of his fall. God could and did to a certain extent give man a knowledge of sin and its results by information; but this we see was not sufficient, for in spite of God's command not to eat of the tree of knowledge under penalty of death, the wages of sin, Adam transgressed. Hence the necessity of conveying the information by some other method. Referring to the scriptures we see this is just what God has done. Throughout the Jewish and gospel ages he has been, and is today, giving us a knowledge of sin; not simply by information but by actual experience. This will tend to enable us to realize that "The way of the transgressor is hard." It will give us every opportunity to get a conception of the degrading influences of sin, and of the blessedness connected with righteousness and everlasting life. It is only necessary to examine the teachings of the scriptures to see the wonderful corroboration of these statements. Paul was not the only man who had a thorn in the flesh. Job had it; the apostles had thorns in the flesh; for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." In Job's case, affliction after affliction was visited upon him; he lost all his earthly goods, and all his children; yet in the midst of his anguish he burst out saying: "Naked came I into the world, and naked I go out; blessed be the name of the Lord." Finally the Lord touched his bone and flesh, and he was afflicted from head to foot with an affection of boils. When asked if he still retained his integrity, and when told to curse God and die he replied: "We receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not also receive evil?" Paul besought the Lord thrice that his thorn might be taken from him, but the Lord said unto him: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Here the Lord showed the necessity of the thorn, which would give man a knowledge of sin by experience, and at the same time increase his humility.

If the Lord sent us great temporal and intellectual blessings or revelations without afflictions, we, like Paul, because of our carnality, would very likely become exalted. So we must have a thorn. Yet we are not without hope, for we are comforted by the thought that the Lord who knows just how much prosperity we can stand; knows also how much adversity, trial, affliction, and disappointment we can endure, and will never tempt us above that which we are able to bear.

Last but not least, I want to notice that Jesus, our exemplar had a thorn. This will be seen when we take into consideration the wonderful hardships, trials and buffetings endured, during the three and a half years of his ministry. Think of him in the beginning of his death suffering's in the garden; praying, sweating great drops of blood; crying to the Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will but thine be done; suffering in the hall, having a crown of thornes (literal thornes this time) placed upon his head, and finally upon the cross for three hours in mortal agony! When contemplating all this who will say he had no thorn? Ah! dear brethren and sisters, Jesus was tempted as we are; We suffered as we suffer, only more severely. Let us follow him. Let us plunge ourselves into his sufferings; for if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him. These afflictions which endure but for a moment will eventually have wrought for us an exceeding weight of glory, and we shall receive a crown of life.

ROSS J. MILLER.

Millersburg, Iowa.